Camp Culture Codes

FIFO Culture Code

Building a culture that deters negative behaviour, encourages ownership and accountability, and fosters an environment that people genuinely enjoy coming back to— for fly-in, fly-out mining and construction crews.

Principle: **Culture is set by the worst behaviour you accept** (adapted from Gruenert & Whitaker, 2015)

Challenge: How does a mining or construction company, with fly-in, fly-out staff, create a culture code that works for an ever changing rotational mix of crew members?

Part 1 — Strategy: How to Build the Code

A culture code only works in FIFO environments if it's built for the specific pressures of that lifestyle — isolation, fatigue, rotating crews, transient relationships, and high-stakes physical work. A generic "values poster" will not survive a single rotation. The approach below outlines how to build one that holds up on site.

1. Build it from real behaviour, not abstract values

Skip words like "integrity" or "respect" as standalone concepts — everyone nods and nothing changes. Instead, define the code as specific, observable behaviours. Not: "We value respect." Instead: "New starters eat with us, not alone. If you see someone sitting by themselves in the mess, you go sit with them." Behavioural standards are enforceable and teachable in a way that values statements are not. Aim for 8–12 concrete "this is how we act here" statements rather than a long values list.

2. Co-create it with the workforce, not just leadership

If it is written by HR or executives and handed down, it will be treated as corporate wallpaper. Run workshops across crews — including contractors, camp and catering staff, and members across different rotational rosters — asking two questions: "What behaviour makes this a good place to work?" and "What behaviour have you seen that shouldn't be tolerated?" The second question matters as much as the first — people on site already know exactly what the problems are. Naming these explicitly, in the workers' own language, is what makes the code credible.

3. Name the deterred behaviours explicitly

Vague codes let bad behaviour hide in ambiguity. Be direct about what is not acceptable, ideally in the same document as what is encouraged:

- Bullying, hazing or "initiation" of new starters
- Undermining someone's authority or competence based on age, gender or tenure
- Turning a blind eye to unsafe practices because "that's just how it's done"
- Disrespect toward camp, catering or cleaning staff
- Gossip, exclusion or clique behaviour that fractures the crew

Naming these upfront removes the “I didn’t realise that was a problem” excuse.

4. Make accountability peer-driven, not just top-down

In FIFO, supervisors rotate too, so accountability cannot rely solely on management being present. Build mechanisms where the crew polices itself: a simple, low-friction way to call out behaviour in the moment (“that’s not how we do it here”); peer-nominated recognition where crews vote on who exemplified the code that swing; toolbox talks or pre-start meetings that open with a two-minute culture check-in alongside the safety check-in — normalising that culture gets the same daily attention as safety.

5. Anchor it in onboarding and handover

Day-one induction should cover the culture code with the same weight as the safety induction, not as a footnote. Assign buddies for new starters for their first swing. Build a handover ritual between outgoing and incoming crews or leaders so the code is not reset every roster change — a quick briefing on what is working and what is not, passed forward.

6. Give leaders a script, not just a slogan

FIFO supervisors are often promoted for technical skill, not people skill, and are only on-site part of the time. Give them specific language for redirecting negative behaviour in the moment; clear, consistent consequences for breaches (graduated but non-negotiable for serious ones such as harassment, bullying or safety shortcuts); and an explicit expectation that they model the code first — crews mirror what leaders tolerate, not what they say.

7. Make psychological safety and reporting real, not theoretical

Given the well-documented issues in FIFO mining around harassment and bullying (Community Development and Justice Standing Committee, 2022), people need to trust that raising a concern will not hurt their reputation, or next contract renewal. Provide multiple reporting channels, including anonymous ones, separate from the direct supervisor. Ensure visible, timely follow-through when something is reported — silence kills trust in the system faster than the original incident. Protect and, where appropriate, publicly support people who speak up, so it becomes normalised rather than career-risky.

8. Make “enjoyable” a deliberate design input, not an afterthought

Camp life often gets treated as logistics rather than culture. Small, deliberate investments matter:

- Communal spaces that encourage mixing across roles and shifts
- Genuinely good food is consistently one of the top drivers of FIFO morale
- Connectivity to home (wifi and call access) that is protected and prioritised
- Non-work activities and traditions that build identity without being mandatory or performative
- Recognition that is specific and public, not a generic “employee of the month” plaque

9. Measure and refresh it

Run short pulse surveys each swing or roster, two to three questions maximum — FIFO workers will not complete long surveys. Include culture questions explicitly in exit interviews, not just pay and logistics. Revisit the code annually with worker input — a code that never changes starts to feel fake.

The throughline: treat the culture code with the same operational rigour as a safety system — daily reinforcement, clear standards, peer accountability, visible leadership modelling, and consistent consequences — rather than a one-off induction document. That is what makes it survive the rotation of people in and out.

Part 2 — Culture Code Template

[Company Name] Culture Code

How We Work. How We Treat Each Other. Every Shift, Every Site.

This code carries the same weight as our safety standards. It applies to every crew member, every contractor, every shift, from day one to your last swing.

Our Standard

1. We look out for the new person.

New starters eat with us, not alone. If someone's sitting by themselves in the mess, you go sit with them. No hazing, no "earning your place," no initiation rituals. You're one of us from day one.

2. We call it out, respectfully, in the moment.

If you see something that doesn't sit right — unsafe, disrespectful, or excluding someone — you say something. "That's not how we do it here" is enough. You won't be punished for speaking up, and neither will the person who makes a report.

3. We treat every role with the same respect.

Camp, catering, and cleaning staff are your coworkers; they get the same courtesy as the crew. No exceptions. How you treat someone who can't advance your career tells us who you are.

4. We don't let humour become a weapon.

Banter is part of the job. Humour that targets someone's gender, age, background, or makes them feel small is not banter — it's not welcome here. Never make jokes or comments about communities, cultures, or life experiences that are not your own.

5. We hand over properly.

Outgoing crews brief the incoming crews — not just on the job, but on the people. What's working, what's not, and who needs a hand. The culture doesn't reset every roster change.

6. We own our mistakes out loud.

If you stuff up, you say so — fast, before it becomes someone else's problem. We fix the issue, not the blame. Hiding a mistake is the only thing that gets you in real trouble here.

7. We never normalise a shortcut.

"That's just how it's done" is not a reason. If a shortcut compromises safety or quality, it gets called out, every time, no matter who's doing it or how senior they are.

8. We protect people who report concerns.

No comeback on your roster, your reputation, or your next contract for raising a genuine concern — through your supervisor or anonymously. Silence protects no one.

9. Leaders go first.

Supervisors and leads model this code before they enforce it. If leadership tolerates something, that's the standard — whatever the poster says.

10. We make the shift worth showing up for.

Good food, real connection to home, spaces where people actually mix across roles and shifts. This isn't just a job site — for two weeks at a time, it's where we live.

What This Looks Like Day to Day

We do this	Not this
Sit with the new starter	Let them eat alone
"Hey, that's not okay" — said directly, respectfully	Letting it slide, or gossiping about it later
Thank the camp cook by name	Treating camp staff as invisible
"I got that wrong, here's the fix"	Covering it up or blaming someone else
Brief the next crew properly	Leaving problems for the next roster
Raise a concern through the proper channel	Staying quiet and letting resentment build

If the Code Is Broken

- First instance (non-safety-critical): Direct conversation, on the spot, from a peer or leader.
- Repeated or serious (harassment, bullying, safety shortcuts): Formal process, involving site leadership and HR, with clear and consistent consequences — regardless of seniority or tenure.
- Reporting a concern never counts against you. Retaliation of any kind is itself a breach of this code.

This Code Belongs to Us

This document was built with input from the people who work it — every role, every roster. It gets reviewed every year, with your input again. If it's not working, say so.

Report a concern: [contact / anonymous channel details]

Questions or feedback on this code: [contact]

Version [X] — Reviewed [Month/Year] — Next review [Month/Year]